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NEW BEDFORD
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EPA EVALUATION REAFFIRMS INCINERATION TO BE SAFEST AND MOST RELIABLE TREATMENT FOR NEW BEDFORD HARBOR HOTSPOT SEDIMENTS

New Bedford, MA -- At a press conference in New Bedford City Hall, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today reaffirmed that incineration remains the safest and most reliable treatment for the high concentrations of PCB contaminated sediment in the "Hot Spot". This decision follows EPA's evaluation of four suggested treatment alternatives to incineration for the highly contaminated sediments from New Bedford Harbor's Hot spot.

"We cannot afford to experiment with untried technologies in an urban environment and the neighborhoods of New Bedford should not be the training grounds for any such experiment," stated EPA Regional Administrator Julie Belaga. "From the outset, the extraordinarily high concentration of PCBs at the New Bedford Harbor Hot Spot and their location in an urban estuary were of paramount importance to EPA. At the request of Congressman Studds, we have carefully evaluated four emerging technologies for their applicability to the Hot Spot contamination. We have determined that given the potential for high human exposures that will exist during the removal and treatment of the highly contaminated sediments, EPA will not accept the ill-defined risks of using unproven technologies. We have a treatment that has proven to be reliable and safe and that's the one we must use!"

The four technologies suggested as possible alternatives to incineration for treating Hot Spot sediments include: (1) thermal gas-phase reductive dechlorination; (2) APEG-plus dechlorination; (3) thermal desorption; and (4) base-catalyzed dechlorination.

These four technologies are all considered innovative technologies. Thermal gas-phase reductive dechlorination has not been utilized in the United States, and EPA has not yet verified

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test results and claims made by its vendor. The base-catalyzed dechlorination process has not been demonstrated on contaminated material and the process is not yet licensed to a commercial vendor.

With the exception of thermal desorption, the alternate technologies require that the untreated sediments undergo a screening step to remove larger particulates prior to treatment. Because of the extraordinarily high concentration of PCB contamination in the Hot Spot sediments, this additional handling of untreated sediments has a high potential for producing PCB releases to the atmosphere through volatization. Thermal desorption, the alternate technology that does not require a screening step, separates the PCBs from the sediments, but does not treat the PCBs.

The evaluation of these technologies is based on a compilation of information derived from EPA reports, vendor brochures, and data supplied by the Risk Reduction Engineering Laboratory of EPA's Office of Research and Development located in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1982, EPA added the New Bedford Harbor site to the National Priorities List, making it eligible for federal action under the Superfund law. In April, 1990, EPA issued a Record of Decision for the Hot Spot cleanup for New Bedford Harbor. EPA's cleanup plan calls for dredging 10,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediments from the harbor, dewatering these sediments, and permanently destroying PCB contamination in a temporary, transportable incinerator to be located at the foot of Sawyer street.

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